

Assembly Bill No. 1836

CHAPTER 754

An act to amend Sections 1354 and 1357.120 of, to amend and renumber Section 1368.4 of, and to add Article 5 (commencing with Section 1363.810) to Chapter 4 of, and Article 1 (commencing with Section 1368.3) and Article 2 (commencing with Section 1369.510) to Chapter 7 of, Title 6 of Part 4 of Division 2 of, the Civil Code, and to repeal Section 383 of the Code of Civil Procedure, relating to common interest developments.

[Approved by Governor September 24, 2004. Filed
with Secretary of State September 24, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1836, Harman. Common interest developments: dispute resolution.

Existing law provides that a common interest development association has standing to institute, defend, settle, or intervene in litigation, arbitration, mediation, or administrative proceedings, in various circumstances, including enforcement of the governing documents. The Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act requires, before a common interest development association or an owner of a separate interest therein brings certain actions related to the enforcement of the development's governing documents, that the parties endeavor to submit their dispute to alternative dispute resolution, as specified. Existing law defines and regulates operating rules in connection with common interest development associations and applies them to association procedures for resolution of assessment disputes.

This bill would revise and recast the provisions described above relating to dispute resolution. The bill would specify that a common interest development association and an owner of a separate interest may enforce governing documents other than the declaration. The bill would create a new dispute resolution procedure for conflicts between an association and a member, to be applied when the dispute concerns specified subjects. The bill would require an association to provide a fair, reasonable, and expeditious procedure for resolving these disputes, as defined by certain minimum standards, and would provide a procedure for associations that do not have a procedure of their own that meets the minimum standards, among them that the member not be charged a fee to participate in the process. The bill would also require that the association provide notice of its dispute resolution process, as specified.

This bill would revise the existing dispute resolution provisions, described above, to clarify their application to other nonjudicial processes and to broaden their applicability to include actions enforcing the Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act and the Nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporation Law. Among other things, the bill would also provide for the tolling of a statute of limitations in certain circumstances, expand the permissible methods of service of a request to submit a dispute to the resolution process, and change the confidentiality protections applied to these procedures. The bill would require that a common interest development association's procedures for the resolution of all disputes, not only those related to assessments, satisfy requirements regarding association operating rules. The bill would make additional technical and conforming changes.

The bill would incorporate additional changes in Section 1357.120 of the Civil Code proposed by AB 2376 that would become operative only if AB 2376 and this bill are both chaptered and become effective on or before January 1, 2005, and this bill is chaptered last.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1354 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1354. (a) The covenants and restrictions in the declaration shall be enforceable equitable servitudes, unless unreasonable, and shall inure to the benefit of and bind all owners of separate interests in the development. Unless the declaration states otherwise, these servitudes may be enforced by any owner of a separate interest or by the association, or by both.

(b) A governing document other than the declaration may be enforced by the association against an owner of a separate interest or by an owner of a separate interest against the association.

(c) In an action to enforce the governing documents, the prevailing party shall be awarded reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

SEC. 2. Section 1357.120 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1357.120. (a) Sections 1357.130 and 1357.140 only apply to an operating rule that relates to one or more of the following subjects:

- (1) Use of the common area or of an exclusive use common area.
- (2) Use of a separate interest, including any aesthetic or architectural standards that govern alteration of a separate interest.
- (3) Member discipline, including any schedule of monetary penalties for violation of the governing documents and any procedure for the imposition of penalties.
- (4) Any standards for delinquent assessment payment plans.



(5) Any procedures adopted by the association for resolution of disputes.

(b) Sections 1357.130 and 1357.140 do not apply to the following actions by the board of directors of an association:

(1) A decision regarding maintenance of the common area.

(2) A decision on a specific matter that is not intended to apply generally.

(3) A decision setting the amount of a regular or special assessment.

(4) A rule change that is required by law, if the board of directors has no discretion as to the substantive effect of the rule change.

(5) Issuance of a document that merely repeats existing law or the governing documents.

SEC. 2.5. Section 1357.120 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1357.120. (a) Sections 1357.130 and 1357.140 only apply to an operating rule that relates to one or more of the following subjects:

(1) Use of the common area or of an exclusive use common area.

(2) Use of a separate interest, including any aesthetic or architectural standards that govern alteration of a separate interest.

(3) Member discipline, including any schedule of monetary penalties for violation of the governing documents and any procedure for the imposition of penalties.

(4) Any standards for delinquent assessment payment plans.

(5) Any procedures adopted by the association for resolution of disputes.

(6) Any procedures for reviewing and approving or disapproving a proposed physical change to a member's separate interest or to the common area.

(b) Sections 1357.130 and 1357.140 do not apply to the following actions by the board of directors of an association:

(1) A decision regarding maintenance of the common area.

(2) A decision on a specific matter that is not intended to apply generally.

(3) A decision setting the amount of a regular or special assessment.

(4) A rule change that is required by law, if the board of directors has no discretion as to the substantive effect of the rule change.

(5) Issuance of a document that merely repeats existing law or the governing documents.

SEC. 3. Article 5 (commencing with Section 1363.810) is added to Chapter 4 of Title 6 of Part 4 of Division 2 of the Civil Code, to read:



Article 5. Dispute Resolution Procedure

1363.810. (a) This article applies to a dispute between an association and a member involving their rights, duties, or liabilities under this title, under the Nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporation Law (Part 3 (commencing with Section 7110) of Division 2 of Title 1 of the Corporations Code), or under the governing documents of the common interest development or association.

(b) This article supplements, and does not replace, Article 2 (commencing with Section 1369.510) of Chapter 7, relating to alternative dispute resolution as a prerequisite to an enforcement action.

1363.820. (a) An association shall provide a fair, reasonable, and expeditious procedure for resolving a dispute within the scope of this article.

(b) In developing a procedure pursuant to this article, an association shall make maximum, reasonable use of available local dispute resolution programs involving a neutral third party, including low-cost mediation programs such as those listed on the Internet Web sites of the Department of Consumer Affairs and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(c) If an association does not provide a fair, reasonable, and expeditious procedure for resolving a dispute within the scope of this article, the procedure provided in Section 1363.840 applies and satisfies the requirement of subdivision (a).

1363.830. A fair, reasonable, and expeditious dispute resolution procedure shall at a minimum satisfy all of the following requirements:

(a) The procedure may be invoked by either party to the dispute. A request invoking the procedure shall be in writing.

(b) The procedure shall provide for prompt deadlines. The procedure shall state the maximum time for the association to act on a request invoking the procedure.

(c) If the procedure is invoked by a member, the association shall participate in the procedure.

(d) If the procedure is invoked by the association, the member may elect not to participate in the procedure. If the member participates but the dispute is resolved other than by agreement of the member, the member shall have a right of appeal to the association's board of directors.

(e) A resolution of a dispute pursuant to the procedure, that is not in conflict with the law or the governing documents, binds the association and is judicially enforceable. An agreement reached pursuant to the procedure, that is not in conflict with the law or the governing documents, binds the parties and is judicially enforceable.



(f) The procedure shall provide a means by which the member and the association may explain their positions.

(g) A member of the association shall not be charged a fee to participate in the process.

1363.840. (a) This section applies in an association that does not otherwise provide a fair, reasonable, and expeditious dispute resolution procedure. The procedure provided in this section is fair, reasonable, and expeditious, within the meaning of this article.

(b) Either party to a dispute within the scope of this article may invoke the following procedure:

(1) The party may request the other party to meet and confer in an effort to resolve the dispute. The request shall be in writing.

(2) A member of an association may refuse a request to meet and confer. The association may not refuse a request to meet and confer.

(3) The association's board of directors shall designate a member of the board to meet and confer.

(4) The parties shall meet promptly at a mutually convenient time and place, explain their positions to each other, and confer in good faith in an effort to resolve the dispute.

(5) A resolution of the dispute agreed to by the parties shall be memorialized in writing and signed by the parties, including the board designee on behalf of the association.

(c) An agreement reached under this section binds the parties and is judicially enforceable if both of the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The agreement is not in conflict with law or the governing documents of the common interest development or association.

(2) The agreement is either consistent with the authority granted by the board of directors to its designee or the agreement is ratified by the board of directors.

(d) A member of the association may not be charged a fee to participate in the process.

1363.850. The notice provided pursuant to Section 1369.590 shall include a description of the internal dispute resolution process provided pursuant to this article.

SEC. 4. Article 1 (commencing with Section 1368.3) is added to Chapter 7 of Title 6 of Part 4 of Division 2 of the Civil Code, to read:

Article 1. Miscellaneous Provisions

1368.3. An association established to manage a common interest development has standing to institute, defend, settle, or intervene in litigation, arbitration, mediation, or administrative proceedings in its own name as the real party in interest and without joining with it the



individual owners of the common interest development, in matters pertaining to the following:

- (a) Enforcement of the governing documents.
- (b) Damage to the common area.
- (c) Damage to a separate interest that the association is obligated to maintain or repair.
- (d) Damage to a separate interest that arises out of, or is integrally related to, damage to the common area or a separate interest that the association is obligated to maintain or repair.

1368.4. (a) In an action maintained by an association pursuant to subdivision (b), (c), or (d) of Section 1368.3, the amount of damages recovered by the association shall be reduced by the amount of damages allocated to the association or its managing agents in direct proportion to their percentage of fault based upon principles of comparative fault. The comparative fault of the association or its managing agents may be raised by way of defense, but shall not be the basis for a cross-action or separate action against the association or its managing agents for contribution or implied indemnity, where the only damage was sustained by the association or its members. It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this subdivision to require that comparative fault be pleaded as an affirmative defense, rather than a separate cause of action, where the only damage was sustained by the association or its members.

(b) In an action involving damages described in subdivision (b), (c), or (d) of Section 1368.3, the defendant or cross-defendant may allege and prove the comparative fault of the association or its managing agents as a setoff to the liability of the defendant or cross-defendant even if the association is not a party to the litigation or is no longer a party whether by reason of settlement, dismissal, or otherwise.

(c) Subdivisions (a) and (b) apply to actions commenced on or after January 1, 1993.

(d) Nothing in this section affects a person's liability under Section 1431, or the liability of the association or its managing agent for an act or omission which causes damages to another.

SEC. 5. Section 1368.4 of the Civil Code is amended and renumbered to read:

1368.5. (a) Not later than 30 days prior to the filing of any civil action by the association against the declarant or other developer of a common interest development for alleged damage to the common areas, alleged damage to the separate interests that the association is obligated to maintain or repair, or alleged damage to the separate interests that arises out of, or is integrally related to, damage to the common areas or separate interests that the association is obligated to maintain or repair, the board of directors of the association shall provide a written notice to



each member of the association who appears on the records of the association when the notice is provided. This notice shall specify all of the following:

- (1) That a meeting will take place to discuss problems that may lead to the filing of a civil action.
- (2) The options, including civil actions, that are available to address the problems.
- (3) The time and place of this meeting.
- (b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), if the association has reason to believe that the applicable statute of limitations will expire before the association files the civil action, the association may give the notice, as described above, within 30 days after the filing of the action.

SEC. 6. Article 2 (commencing with Section 1369.510) is added to Chapter 7 of Title 6 of Part 4 of Division 2 of the Civil Code, to read:

Article 2. Alternative Dispute Resolution

1369.510. As used in this article:

- (a) “Alternative dispute resolution” means mediation, arbitration, conciliation, or other nonjudicial procedure that involves a neutral party in the decisionmaking process. The form of alternative dispute resolution chosen pursuant to this article may be binding or nonbinding, with the voluntary consent of the parties.
- (b) “Enforcement action” means a civil action or proceeding, other than a cross-complaint, for any of the following purposes:
 - (1) Enforcement of this title.
 - (2) Enforcement of the Nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporation Law (Part 3 (commencing with Section 7110) of Division 2 of Title 1 of the Corporations Code).
 - (3) Enforcement of the governing documents of a common interest development.

1369.520. (a) An association or an owner or a member of a common interest development may not file an enforcement action in the superior court unless the parties have endeavored to submit their dispute to alternative dispute resolution pursuant to this article.

(b) This section applies only to an enforcement action that is solely for declaratory, injunctive, or writ relief, or for that relief in conjunction with a claim for monetary damages not in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000).

(c) This section does not apply to a small claims action.

(d) Except as otherwise provided by law, this section does not apply to an assessment dispute.



1369.530. (a) Any party to a dispute may initiate the process required by Section 1369.520 by serving on all other parties to the dispute a Request for Resolution. The Request for Resolution shall include all of the following:

- (1) A brief description of the dispute between the parties.
- (2) A request for alternative dispute resolution.
- (3) A notice that the party receiving the Request for Resolution is required to respond within 30 days of receipt or the request will be deemed rejected.
- (4) If the party on whom the request is served is the owner of a separate interest, a copy of this article.

(b) Service of the Request for Resolution shall be by personal delivery, first-class mail, express mail, facsimile transmission, or other means reasonably calculated to provide the party on whom the request is served actual notice of the request.

(c) A party on whom a Request for Resolution is served has 30 days following service to accept or reject the request. If a party does not accept the request within that period, the request is deemed rejected by the party.

1369.540. (a) If the party on whom a Request for Resolution is served accepts the request, the parties shall complete the alternative dispute resolution within 90 days after the party initiating the request receives the acceptance, unless this period is extended by written stipulation signed by both parties.

(b) Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 1115) of Division 9 of the Evidence Code applies to any form of alternative dispute resolution initiated by a Request for Resolution under this article, other than arbitration.

(c) The costs of the alternative dispute resolution shall be borne by the parties.

1369.550. If a Request for Resolution is served before the end of the applicable time limitation for commencing an enforcement action, the time limitation is tolled during the following periods:

(a) The period provided in Section 1369.530 for response to a Request for Resolution.

(b) If the Request for Resolution is accepted, the period provided by Section 1369.540 for completion of alternative dispute resolution, including any extension of time stipulated to by the parties pursuant to Section 1369.540.

1369.560. (a) At the time of commencement of an enforcement action, the party commencing the action shall file with the initial pleading a certificate stating that one or more of the following conditions is satisfied:



(1) Alternative dispute resolution has been completed in compliance with this article.

(2) One of the other parties to the dispute did not accept the terms offered for alternative dispute resolution.

(3) Preliminary or temporary injunctive relief is necessary.

(b) Failure to file a certificate pursuant to subdivision (a) is grounds for a demurrer or a motion to strike unless the court finds that dismissal of the action for failure to comply with this article would result in substantial prejudice to one of the parties.

1369.570. (a) After an enforcement action is commenced, on written stipulation of the parties, the matter may be referred to alternative dispute resolution. The referred action is stayed. During the stay, the action is not subject to the rules implementing subdivision (c) of Section 68603 of the Government Code.

(b) The costs of the alternative dispute resolution shall be borne by the parties.

1369.580. In an enforcement action in which fees and costs may be awarded pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 1354, the court, in determining the amount of the award, may consider whether a party's refusal to participate in alternative dispute resolution before commencement of the action was reasonable.

1369.590. (a) An association shall annually provide its members a summary of the provisions of this article that specifically references this article. The summary shall include the following language:

“Failure of a member of the association to comply with the alternative dispute resolution requirements of Section 1369.520 of the Civil Code may result in the loss of your right to sue the association or another member of the association regarding enforcement of the governing documents or the applicable law.”

(b) The summary shall be provided either at the time the pro forma budget required by Section 1365 is distributed or in the manner prescribed in Section 5016 of the Corporations Code. The summary shall include a description of the association's internal dispute resolution process, as required by Section 1363.850.

SEC. 7. Section 383 of the Code of Civil Procedure is repealed.

SEC. 8. Section 2.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 1357.120 of the Civil Code proposed by both this bill and AB 2376. It shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2005, (2) each bill amends Section



1357.120 of the Civil Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after AB 2376, in which case Section 2 of this bill shall not become operative.

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